

Remarks

I. Support for Amendments

The foregoing amendment to the claims is believed to place the claims into condition for immediate allowance or into better condition for consideration on appeal. Moreover, the amendment does not raise new issues for consideration by the Examiner. Entry of the present amendment is respectfully requested.

II. Status of the Claims

By the foregoing amendment, claims 33-46 and 105 have been cancelled. Upon entry of this amendment, claims 47-63 are pending in the application, with claim 47 being the independent claim.

III. Summary of the Office Action

In the Office Action dated September 19, 2001, the Examiner allowed claims 47-63, but maintained his rejection of claims 33-46 and 105. By the foregoing amendments, Applicants have cancelled claims 33-46 and 105, rendering moot the Examiner's rejections, as discussed below.

IV. The Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) Is Rendered Moot

In the Office Action at page 2, section 2, the Examiner has rejected claims 33-39 and 105 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Sloma (U.S. Patent No. 4,748,233) ["Sloma"]. By the foregoing amendments, claims 33-39 and 105 have been cancelled, thus rendering moot this rejection as it may have applied to these claims.

V. The Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) Is Rendered Moot

In the Office Action at page 3, section 4, the Examiner rejected claims 40-42 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sloma in view of Copeland *et al.* (U.S. Pat. No. 6,103,473) ["Copeland"]. By the foregoing amendments, claims 40-42 have been cancelled, thus rendering moot this rejection as it may have applied to these claims.

VI. The Second Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) Is Rendered Moot

In the Office Action at page 4, section 5, the Examiner rejected claims 43-46 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sloma in view of Ranu (U.S. Pat. No. 5,824,875) ["Ranu"]. By the foregoing amendments, claims 43-46 have been cancelled, thus rendering moot this rejection as it may have applied to these claims.

VII. Other Matters

A Fourth Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement and Form PTO-1449 (1 page) is being filed concurrently with the present Amendment and Reply. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner return the initialed Form PTO-1449 (1 page) together with the next communication from the Office.

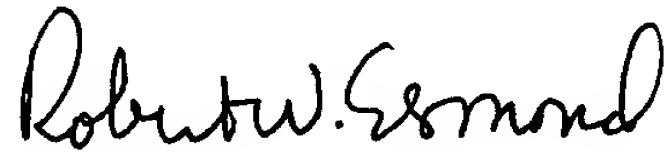
VIII. Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn.

Applicants believe that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication could expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Respectfully submitted,

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Version with markings to show changes made

Claims 33-46 and 105 are sought to be cancelled.